

Asja Nina Kovačev

Zdravstvena fakulteta Univerze v Ljubljani  
Health Faculty, University of Ljubljana

# Return to the Origins – Wagner, Jung, and Symbolic Forms

## Vrnitev k izvorom – Wagner, Jung in simbolične oblike

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### IZVLEČEK

Psihoanaliza sprva ni posvečala posebne pozornosti glasbi. Vendar so se taka stališča do danes spremenila. Neopsihoanalitik Carl Gustav Jung je bil navdušen zlasti nad Wagnerjevimi glasbenimi dramami, nad njegovimi tematskimi analizami mita, nad vodilnimi motivi in mističnimi prizori.

### ABSTRACT

At first psychoanalysis did not pay any particular attention to music. Still, this attitude has changed by now. The neopsychanalyst Carl Gustav Jung was particularly fascinated by Wagner's music dramas, his thematic analyses of myth, his leitmotifs, symbols and mystic scenes.

The beginnings of psychoanalysis did not imply any concern with music. Freud was namely supposed to feel uneasy, if he could not explain everything rationally. Since music predominantly influences emotions, the subjects' experiences, when they listened to it, could not be explained purely by reason. Because of that, Freud's attitude towards music was very ambivalent. He even described himself as 'totally unmusical' (ganz un-musikalisch) (1936), but such a reaction could be interpreted as his unconscious and suppressed feelings of anxiety, when he was confronted with something, which could not be explained by his theory. Therefore, it was an intrinsically anxious experience for Freud, if he was emotionally moved by something without knowing, what was moving him or why (Roazen, 1975).

Despite Freud's clear resistance to music as an instrument of psychoanalytic research, he could enjoy certain operas and he used musical metaphors in the context of his theory

and therapy. The operas, he listened to, were above all regarded as 'conversational' and 'narrative' forms of music, and he might have imagined that they helped him to establish some kind of 'cognitive control' over the affective impact of the musical sounds. According to Cheshire (1996) Freud may have even feared the potential therapeutic power of music, which has always been much more influential than psychoanalysis.

Because of all these facts some theorists assert that the orthodox psychoanalysis did not have much to offer in the scientific debate about the influence of music on human organism. Still, Cora L. Díaz de Chumaceiro in her paper 'Richard Wagner's life and music: What Freud knew' (1993) offered a completely different explanation of the relation between Freud's psychoanalysis and music. She argued that Freud knew a lot about Wagner, his music, and his views, but he somehow neglected his contribution. Freud must have felt some threat because of Wagner's profound theoretical explanations of what he later wanted to present as an original contribution to the understanding of human psyche (Díaz de Chumaceiro, 1993).

Among Wagner's chief concerns there were the origins of musical affect, inspiration, and genius. In his attempts to explain these phenomena, Wagner offered a powerful dream theory that predated by a half a century essential elements of Freud's dream theory such as the unconscious, condensation, and secondary revision. Cora L. Díaz de Chumaceiro even asserts that Wagner's theory was almost certainly used by Freud in formulating his own interpretation of dreams. Additionally, Wagner integrated his elaborate music system with contemporaneous philosophical and evolutionary views. So Freud did not want to cite Wagner (which Díaz de Chumaceiro (1993) calls an 'inexplicable case of omission').

Freud's failure to explain the basic psychological and philosophical issues connecting music and affect obviously meant that orthodox psychoanalysis at that time could not provide a profound theory of music and its effects on human psyche. Lacking Wagner's unique and original perspective of the capacity of music, which was supposed to inspire and emotionally enrich people, psychoanalysis at the beginning limited emotional feelings to negative affects, suppressed desires and defence mechanisms.

### *Freud's successors and their attitude towards music*

In spite of Freud's inability to explain the subtle influence of music on human emotions, some psychoanalysts realised the crucial importance of music for human psyche. One of Freud's earliest students, Theodor Reik (1953) used the theme of the 'haunting melody' in Freud's Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis (1916-17 [1915-17]) to show (contrary to Freud) that musical structure could represent feelings. Reik stressed that melody could convey emotions far better than words and showed that music as the voice of the 'unknown itself' could become compulsive in its attempt to convey secret messages. His supposition was based on his discovery that the unconscious material sometimes emerged as a melody rather than as mere thoughts. Because of that he was sure that melody could better indicate moods and unknown feelings (Reik, 1953). His thesis has been later developed further by some other psychoanalysts, who believed

that the use of music in psychotherapy could bring to some profounder results than the use of mere words.

Some of the later psychoanalysts found out that psychoanalysis had to enlarge and deepen its understanding of human psyche, especially its emotional aspect. The best possibility to enlarge the domain of psychoanalysis was the use of music, the emotional language 'par excellence'.

This was very early discovered by Carl Gustav Jung, who was at first Freud's admirer, but later their theoretical systems and research orientations completely parted. He also had a completely different attitude towards music and its influence on the subjects' emotions.

### *The contribution of Carl Gustav Jung*

Carl Gustav Jung (July 26, 1875 – June 6, 1961) was a Swiss psychiatrist and the founder of a neopsychoanalytic school, which he named **analytical psychology**. He was one of the most widely read writers of the twentieth century on the psychology of human mind. The total amount of his works is very large (about 200 papers and several books, edited later in his Collected Works in English). His influence has been as enduring and diverse as that of Sigmund Freud.

At first Jung worked together with Freud. He studied word associations (1904-1907) and invented a new term for a group of repressed psychic contents, which he named a 'complex'. Between 1907 and 1912 Jung confirmed many of Freud's ideas. Still, their cooperation ended when Jung published 'Psychology and the Unconscious: a study of transformations and symbolisms of the libido' (1912), in which he argued against some of Freud's ideas.

Jung's primary disagreement with Freud stemmed from their differing concepts of the unconscious. Freud stressed the importance of the personal unconscious, i.e. that aspect of the psyche, which usually does not surpass the individual's experiences and consists mainly of repressed emotions, needs and desires. Contrary to that Jung was sure that human mind contains much more than only consciousness and the individual unconscious. He formed a new term – 'collective unconscious', which is supposed to be constructed by inherited, universal themes that run through all human life. The whole history of the human race, back to the most primitive times, has been governed by the laws of the collective unconscious, which has remained untouched (and perhaps also untouchable) by personal experiences (Campbell, 1971). There Jung (1934-1954) located the archetypes.

After his split with Freud Jung interpreted Freud's theory of the unconscious as incomplete, one-sided, overly-concrete, and unnecessarily negative. According to Jung (1917) Freud's conception of the unconscious was too restrictive, for he believed that the unconscious had a lot of creative potentials. He was sure that the archetypes and images of the collective unconscious, which contained mysterious depths, were constantly processed and renewed.

In the following years Jung (1932, 1933, 1938) became more and more interested in the study of mythological and religious symbolism in different cultures, which before

and after him inspired many writers and composers (such as Wagner). Jung wanted to find analogies between the contents of the unconscious in Western man and the myths, cults, and rituals of primitive peoples.

Jungian therapy dealt with dreams and fantasies and was supposed to set up discussion between the subject's consciousness and the contents of the unconscious. If the therapy was successful, the patient entered the individuation process. This (according to Jung's interpretation) consists of psychological transformations and should enable the opposite tendencies of human mind to work together with the aim to achieve the subject's personal wholeness.

Jung (1912, 1917) thought that the unconscious was crucial for the psychological development of human beings and spent a lot of time researching this aspect of life, which has often appeared in symbolic form in dreams and other spiritual experiences. His unique and broadly influential approach to psychology emphasized the understanding of psyche with the help of the exploration of dreams, art, mythology, world religion, and philosophy. Although he was above all a theoretical psychologist and a practicing clinician, he spent a lot of time studying other realms, including Eastern and Western philosophy, alchemy (Jung, 1944), astrology, sociology, literature and the arts. In his works he emphasized the importance of balance and harmony, which is also one of the basic determinants of a good musical composition. He was sure that modern humans rely too heavily on science and would benefit from integrating spirituality and appreciation of the unconscious in their consciousness.

Jung was able to identify the extreme importance of music for human psyche. This can be realised from Peter Gabriel's song 'Rhythm of the Heat' (Security, 1982), where Gabriel, describes Jung's visit to Africa. There Jung joined a group of tribal drummers and dancers, which made him fear that the emotionally dense music could take control over him. At that time, Jung was exploring the concept of the collective unconscious, and was fascinated by the drummers' and dancers' suggestive power. People, who joined the ritual dance, really let the music control them. Gabriel learned about Jung's journey to Africa from Jung's essay *Symbols and the interpretation of dreams* (1974). In his song, Gabriel tried to capture the powerful feelings that African tribal music evoked in Jung by means of intense use of tribal drumbeats.

The most notable contributions of C. G. Jung, which are important also for the research of music, include his concept of the psychological archetype, his theory of synchronicity and the collective unconscious - also known as 'a reservoir of the experiences of human species'.

### *Jung's Analytical psychology*

Analytical psychology primarily explores how the collective unconscious, which is cross-cultural and common to all human beings, influences personality (Jung et al., 1928). It is utilized not only for patients with certain mental disorders, but also for people, who desire to promote their own psychological development and well-being. Jung's approach to psychology emphasized the understanding of psyche through the exploration

of anthropology, astrology, alchemy, dreams, art, mythology, religion, and philosophy.

Jung (Jung, Dell, 1940) believed that the integration of opposites (e.g. masculine and feminine, thinking and feeling, science and spirituality) was very important. He was sure that the studying of the humanities was crucial for the understanding of human psyche and wrote about that in his letter to the *Psychoanalytic Review* (1913). Many of his studies extend into different realms of the humanities: from comparative religion and philosophy, to criticism of art and literature.

Throughout all his life Jung (1934) tried to determine the reconciliation of the subject's consciousness with the world of the supra-personal archetypes. He understood the individual's encounter with the unconscious as central for this process. A person experiences the unconscious through symbols that appear in all aspects of life: in dreams, art, religion, symbolic dramas and in all relationships and life pursuits. The subject's encounter with the collective unconscious is enabled by the symbolic language. So, the individual can harmonize his life with the suprapersonal archetypal forces only through the attention and openness to the world.

Exploration of the subject's 'inner space' was based on Jung's extensive knowledge of Freudian theory, which he combined with his knowledge of mythology, religion, and philosophy. He studied profoundly the symbolism of complex mystical traditions, such as Gnosticism, Alchemy, Kabala, and combined their understanding with Hinduism and Buddhism. From this foundation, Jung's life work was to make sense of the unconscious and its habit of revealing itself in symbolic form through archetypes. Later in his life, Jung (1944) spoke of the transcendent function of the psyche, by which the consciousness and the unconscious are united. He believed that this would lead to the full realisation of the potentials of the individual self.

Jung learned many concepts and tools from Freud's method of psychoanalysis (such as the unconscious, dream analysis, and free associations), but his contributions to dream analysis were much more extensive and influential. Besides, he invented and defined some new psychological concepts, which have also proved to be very useful in the study of certain musical works. The most important of them are

- The archetype;
- The collective unconscious;
- The complex;
- Synchronicity;
- Individuation and
- Psychological types.

### *The archetype*

Carl Gustav Jung (1934) discovered that certain symbolic themes exist in all cultures and civilisations, all epochs, and in every individual. Together these symbolic themes comprise 'the archetypes of the collective unconscious' and represent the basic elements of the eternal truths in myths.

The term archetype descends from Greek and originally meant a model, i.e. the initial version of something that is later multiplied. Ideal model phenomena and characters were easily recognizable as type-roles in drama and literature (for example the evil step-mother, the miser, the brave hero, etc.) and were usually traceable back to the myth and fable. Jung used this term in his theory of psychology and culture in an elaborate way, giving it his own specific meaning. He repeatedly referred to such fictional type-roles, among which 'the hero' was the most frequent. Still, to Jung (1934-1954) the archetypes implied much more than only typical characters that appear in all cultures. They represented the symbolic keys to truths and the paths to personal enlightenment, which (according to him) created myths, religions, and philosophical ideas that influenced whole nations and epochs.

The archetypes refer to idealized or prototypical models of persons, objects, or phenomena, similar to Plato's ideas. According to Jung (Jung et al. 1978), archetypes reside in that part of the unconscious, which is common to all human beings (and is therefore collective). These archetypes are not directly available to the conscious mind, but manifest themselves in dreams and other mystical experiences. Certain common characteristics can be found in all stories and characters all over the world. This supports the idea about the existence of universal archetypes in mythology, literature, and religions.

Jung (Jung, 1970) believed that a person could live a full life only in harmony with the archetypal forces. He asserted that the symbols and archetypes of the subject's collective unconscious can be primarily discovered in the person's dreams, revealing important keys to the individual's growth and development. Through the understanding of how the individual unconscious is integrated with the collective unconscious, the person can be helped towards achieving a state of individuation or wholeness of the self.

Archetypes, the symbolic elements, containing different aspects of human physical and mental lives, are according to Carl G. Jung (1934) the clues to self-realization in myths, and in many other cultural phenomena. Jung discovered different archetypes through careful recording of his own dreams, fantasies, and visions, as well as those of his patients and found out that these archetypes had both, good and bad manifestations, reflecting the principle of the opposites in the psyche.

Jung's archetypes are not limited to persons, but may include also animals and objects. According to Jung (1934) there exists a multitude of archetypes. Some of them are known, while others still have to be discovered. Archetypal contents are supposed to get incorporated into the archaic heritage by repetitious experience. So, an image can be considered archetypal when it can be shown to exist in the records of human history, in identical form and with the same meaning.

An archetype retains such potency wherever it appears (Jung, 1934). Its symbolic function emerges, even if this is not intended by its user. People are drawn to archetypes, often obsessed by them, whether they know their function or not. They feel a resonance from their unconscious, recognise it and are stimulated by the archetypal contents. Their universality is proved also by the fact that Jung (1934) found expressions of the same archetypes in his studies of tribal folk wisdom, mythology and fairy tales in Algiers, Tunis, New Mexico, Uganda, Kenya, Mount Elgon, Egypt, Rome and India.

*The basic archetypes*

Particularly important archetypes in Jung's theory (1934) are: the 'self', the 'persona', the 'shadow', the 'anima/animus', the 'mother', the 'child', and the 'wise old man'.

- The self is the most important archetype, for it represents the centre of the personality, i.e. the centre of its conscious and unconscious part. It is characterised by the harmony and balance between the various opposing psychic qualities. The symbols of the self are often manifested as geometrical forms, particularly mandalas, but also as figures with four parts. The self may also be presented in the form of an important human or divine creature (for example as Buddha or Christ).
- The persona is the mask that people wear to make a particular impression on others. It may reveal or conceal their real nature. Most often it represents a compromise between a person's real individuality and the society's expectations.
- The shadow is the negative or inferior side of the personality, which includes animal tendencies that people have inherited from their pre-human ancestors.
- The anima/animus personifies the subject's inner attitude. The anima is supposed to represent the feminine in men and the animus is the comparable counterpart in the female psyche.
- The great mother archetype is expected to be almost the same for all people. Mother is the source of life and nurture and her images are nearly inexhaustible. This archetype includes different manifestations: Mother Earth, Divine Mother, deep water, womb, a vessel, the sea, the moon, etc.
- The child archetype represents original or child-like condition in the life of the individual and reminds the conscious mind of its origins. It also signifies the potentiality of future personality development and self-realization.
- The wise old man is the archetype of meaning, spirit and authority.

Jung frequently mentions also some other archetypes:

- The hero, who pursues a great quest to realize his destiny.
- Mana and other concepts of spiritual energy.
- The god, the perfect image of the Self.
- The goddess, the great mother, or Mother Earth.
- The trickster, a rascal agent pushing people towards change.
- The beast, a representation of the primitive past of human beings.
- The journey, a representation of the quest towards self-realization.
- Life, death and rebirth, the cyclic nature of existence.
- Light and dark, images of consciousness and the unconscious.

The majority of archetypes can be recognised also in Wagner's operas, particularly in *the Ring of the Nibelung*.

*The Collective Unconscious*

The collective unconscious is a key concept in analytical psychology and can be understood as the totality of human experiences. However, it is not directly available to people, but is encountered in a symbolic form through dreams and other mystical experiences. Jung (1967) believed that the collective unconscious guides to the self-fulfilment. He presented it as the whole spiritual heritage of mankind's evolution born anew in the brain-structure of every individual. It can be considered as an immense depository of ancient wisdom. So each person should strive to bring the individual self into harmony with it. Those, who are able to fulfil their potentials as individuals, also live in harmony with humankind as a whole. Contrary to Freud, Jung regarded the unconscious as something positive and named it the guide and the advisor of the consciousness.

While the personal unconscious is organized by complexes (f. e. Oedipal complex, etc.), the collective unconscious is characterized by 'archetypes', the 'instinctual patterns of behaviour and perception', which can be discovered in dreams and myths. Therefore Joseph Campbell (1962, 1964, 1968, 1987), influenced by Jung, studied archetypal patterns in the mythologies of all cultures.

Jung's interest in the unconscious was not just theoretical; it has been developed on the basis of his own frequent experiences of vivid dreams and visions. After breaking with Freud, Jung deliberately allowed this part of his nature free expression, recording in detail his dreams and fantasies.

*Dream analysis*

Jung (1974) ascribed to dreams completely different meanings as his former teacher Sigmund Freud. Freud used them to explore the subjects' individual unconscious and believed that dreams predominantly consisted of repressed desires. Contrary to him Jung found in dreams a source of myths and symbols that could be a key to his own and his patients' self-understanding and enable their journey to wholeness. He was sure that the archetypes of the collective unconscious could be discovered by the primitive, analogical mode of thinking, specific to dreams.

Jung did not see dreams as a way to hide the dreamer's true feelings from the conscious mind, as Freud did. Instead of that, he saw dreams as providing a guide to the waking self and helping the dreamer achieve a kind of wholeness. To Jung (1974), dreams were a way of offering solutions to the problems that the dreamer was experiencing, when he/she was awake. Dreams are considered to be an integral, important, and personal expression of the individual's unconscious in analytical psychology. They reveal the symbols and archetypes contained in the person's unconscious, which can be keys to the individual's growth and development.

*Other important Jung's terms*

- Some other important terms, developed by Carl Gustav Jung, acomplex,
- individuation and
- synchronicity.
- **Complex** is a term, which was formed by Jung (1907) in his earlier career. He defined it as an emotionally charged group of ideas or images and supposed that complexes are relatively autonomous architects of dreams and symptoms and the source of all human emotions. They are not negative in themselves, but their effects often are.
- **Individuation** is a concept that was developed in the psychotherapy of the middle-aged and elderly people, especially of those, who felt that their lives had lost their meaning. Jung found that people could rediscover sense of their being in dreams and imagination, as well as through the exploration of mythology and religion, which could help them to develop richer personalities.
- The term **synchronicity** implies two simultaneous events that occur coincidentally and are not causally related but are in a meaningful connection. Synchronicity can also be understood as a meaningful coincidence of an inner image with an outer event, which can often help to see the world in a new light (Boeree, 2006).

*Psychological types*

One of Jung's most important discoveries was his definition of two psychological types that were supposed to be inborn and not socially constructed through interaction with parents, family, culture and other external influences. Social influences could only help them to develop without problems. These types are:

- **Extravert** - outer-directed, sociable, and action-oriented type and
- **Introvert** - inner-directed type that needs privacy and space, prefers solitude and is often reflective.

Besides these types Jung (Jung, Baynes, 1921) also determined four basic functions in human psyche - thinking, feeling, sensing, and intuiting. These discoveries were very important for the further development of psychology, but did not have any particular influence on the studies of music. In spite of that Jung even in his work 'Psychological Types' mentioned Wagner's Parsifal and the story of Saint Grail.

*Jung's influences on different researchers*

Jung has always had a strong influence on psychology, but also beyond it. Many writers, artists, musicians, film makers, theologians, and mythologists have found inspiration in Jung's work (for example the mythologist Joseph Campbell and religiologist Mircea Eliade). Within the field of psychology, Jung's work has led to the construction of personality tests, based on his psychological types. Besides, his concept of archetypes

has formed the basis of Hillman's archetypal psychology, while his wide-ranging interpretation of dreams and associations counteracted Freud's restricted approach. Jung's analytical psychology remains one of the pillars of depth psychology.

### *Jung and his fascination by Wagner*

Jung was strongly impressed by Wagner's work. In the majority of his writings he referred to some character or motive (most often to Teutonic gods) and their role in Wagner's operas. Particularly frequent was the mentioning of Wotan.

In the *'Symbols of Transformation'* (1952), a revised version of the *'Psychology of the Unconscious'* Jung mentioned Wotan galloping in a storm. He also wrote about heroic qualities of Siegfried and his feelings for Brunhilde, who was characterized as his spiritual mother, while Siegelinde was his human mother. Brunhilde was also presented as the anima archetype, while Mime was presented as a 'Terrible mother'. In that text Jung also mentioned the broken sword, which Siegfried had to reforge to accomplish his heroic deeds. Besides, Jung (1952) stressed the important role of the 'Mother Earth' and 'mother-bird'.

In his work on *'Psychological Types'* (1921) Jung predominantly referred to Parsifal and his symbolism in the connection with the symbolism of Saint Grail, while in *'Two Essays on Analytical Psychology'* (1917, 1928) he presented the relationship between Nietzsche and Wagner.

In *'The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious'* (1934-1954) and *'Psychology and Religion: West and East'* (1938) Jung often mentioned Wotan in different contexts, while in *'Psychology and Alchemy'* (1944) he frequently referred to Wagner's musical presentation of fire. In *'Alchemical studies'* and *'Mysterium Coniunctionis'* (1956) Jung mentioned Wagner's Parsifal several times and stressed that one of the basic features of Wagner's music was the representation of archetypes.

Jung analysed Wagner's music also in his work *'The Spirit in Man, Art, and Literature'*, where he compared Wagner's and Dante's work, and stressed Wagner's fascination by the Nordic myth and other mythical events. Even in his *'The Development of Personality'* (1991) he did not forget to stress the importance of Parsifal. In *'The Symbolic Life'* there appeared several references to different mythological and symbolic themes that were presented in Wagner's operas: Grail, spear in Parsifal, the recurring motif in *'Der fliegende Holländer'*, etc. Jung even twice compared Mephisto in Faust with Wotan.

Wagner's work was very frequently mentioned in the notes for Jung's Seminar in 1928-1930 and he also used Wagnerian metaphors as parts of his symbolic language in interviews. So, he presented Nazi troops as the representatives of the Wotan cult.

From the examples stated above it is obvious that Jung was very impressed by Wagner's work and he interpreted it very often. The typical symbols that appear in Wagner's operas (particularly in his tetralogy 'the Ring') still cannot be completely explained by Jung's theory. Wagner predominantly relied on ancient Teutonic myths, which was also connected by his national identity, while Jung in his approach studied many different myths and was very informed about their similarities and differences.

Both, Jung and Wagner were extremely fascinated by myth, which is clearly recognised from their works.

## MYTH – A SYMBOLIC FORM THAT EXPLAINS THE UNIVERSE

Myth is a particular form of the collective consciousness and could be regarded as one of the earliest forms of cognition. It is a complex system of fantastic representations about the natural and social surroundings of human beings.

Throughout history myths have always flourished. They have been a steady inspiration of all creative activities of human beings. Campbell (1949) stresses that myth is the secret opening through which the inexhaustible energies of the cosmos pour into human cultural manifestations and that religions, philosophies, arts, the social forms of primitive and historic man, prime discoveries in science and dreams 'boil up from the basic, magic ring of myth'.

Dardel (1984) asserts that the myth tells something that is of essential importance and that it represents a way of living in the world, of orienting oneself and of seeking answers to the basic questions of human existence.

Keen and Valley-Fox (1989) define myths as the 'interlocking stories, rituals and customs that inform and give the pivotal sense of meaning and direction to a person, community, or culture'. Their interpretation is similar to Freud's definition of unconscious, for they assert that a myth is like an iceberg, whose 10 percent are visible and 90 percent are beneath the surface of consciousness.

The majority of mythologists are sure that the organising myth of any culture functions in ways that may be creative or destructive, healthful or pathological. By providing a world picture and a set of stories, which explain why things are as they are, it creates consensus, sanctifies the social order, and prescribes the way of living. In the same measure that myth provides people with security and identity, it also creates selective blindness, narrowness, and rigidity because it is intrinsically conservative. It encourages them to follow the faith of their ancestors and to imitate the actions of the heroes that it presents. Their activities are often repeated in different rituals.

Kirk (1984) stresses that the mythic tales needn't always have a sacred nature. They can namely take on many different forms and functions. Therefore no definition of myths can easily cover all the possible uses, which overlap each other but do not coincide. Still, myth is certainly a type of cognition that is different from science (Rogerson, 1984), for its main element is imagination.

According to Rogerson (1984) the Romantic Movement of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (contrary to the Enlightenment) regarded myths as expressions of the deepest creative potentials of man. He presents myths as constant sources of inspiration to dramatists, poets and painters, which enable them to express profound truths about human existence. Similar is also Larsen's (1990) interpretation of myth, for he denotes it as the 'universal tongue of the human imagination'. Because of that Segal (1999, 2004) stresses that mythic imagination does not only imply rich fantasising or reviving classic myths and fables, but enables thorough understanding of the phe-

nomena, which seem to be ordinary, but imply 'secret causes', i.e. mythic, archetypal patterns beneath the surface.

Hillman (1979) interprets mythical stories as presentations of the archetypal modes of experiencing and as thematic tales of different (Celtic, Nordic, and Greek) cultures, while Gaster (1984) presents myth as an expression of the concept that all things can be viewed under two aspects at the same time. On the one hand they can be temporal and immediate; on the other hand they can be eternal and transcendental.

Eliade (1984) stresses that a living myth is always connected with a cult, inspiring and justifying religious behaviour, so he is sure that the best possibility for understanding the structure of mythical thought is the studying of cultures where a myth is alive, i.e. where it is considered to reveal the truth 'par excellence'. In such cultures the myth namely connects the individual to his clan and invests him with his social and dramatic role (Dardel, 1984).

Dardel (1984) is sure that the mythical does not exclude reason, or precede it in time. It also does not completely disappear with its appearance, but co-exists with it and is complementary to it. So it could be compared to the primitive, archaic man that is still present in contemporary intellectuals. This conviction coincides with Larsen's (1984) thought that people make myths every day without knowing it. So the myth, deep within human psyche, illuminates every reality giving it direction and value. Therefore it is a universal, fundamental phenomenon, which (while keeping profound motives, inexpressible emotions and feelings hidden within the secret of the individual) reveals through surface gestures, forms and words, something internal that - without ever growing old - lives on in human hearts over centuries. So the studying of myths leads back to a remote, primordial past: to events, heroes, gods who pre-existed everything that exists now.

### *The role of myth in different historical periods*

Ancient civilisations invented myth with the purpose to explain the fundamental problems of human essence and to give meaning to and the natural, social, and historical circumstances (Kovačev, 2000).

In Archaic societies myth was regarded as reality, so different myths (particularly the myths concerning the origins of the world) formed the basis of their early history and geography. Beside being connected with the beginning of science, myth was also crucially important for the beginning of art. Romantic philosophy even ascribed it the dominant role in providing the material for artistic production. Original mythical poems were formally very poor, aesthetically unelaborated (without rhymes or refined metaphors), while their contents were characterised by exaggeration and unlimited imagination. The myth's original aspirations were namely not aesthetical, but gnoseological (Kovačev, 1991).

In its earliest periods of development myth represented the traditional foundation of culture (Schechner, 1990) and gradually even its aesthetic function has been developed. This appeared when mythical themes were elaborated and used to create literary and plastic works of art. Later this function even prevailed over the ideological, religious, cognitive, and political functions of myth and it has remained by now.

One of the crucial characteristics of myth is its symbolism. Myth namely reflects the diffuse and undifferentiated primitive mind. Still, it is not only a story, but also a special form of collective consciousness, which (as a particular form of thinking and expression) is reflected in language, art, religion, science and politics. Mythical symbols and metaphors are deeply rooted in all human cultural activities. Still, the most important are their artistic and religious functions.

### *Myth and the origins of art*

The influences of myth and religion on artistic creation are particularly obvious when the contents of the early works of art are analysed. These are often full of magic, mythical and religious meanings. The sacralisation of the artistically elaborated contents was determined by the fact that through its form it was possible to create a new order, a new rhythm, a new artistic drama characterised by one's own personality (Kovačev, 1991). The form was the symbol of the representation and modification of natural and supernatural reality, and it enabled its presentation in a particular way, which was adapted to human cognitive capabilities of that time.

The images of gods and divinities were most often anthropomorphic, which had two main functions. They were the expressions of the mortals' identification with the highest and the mightiest creatures. Besides, their representation facilitated their understanding. The same were the functions of the images of abstract notions. Therefore anthropomorphism and theriomorphism were very frequent in poetry and in the plastic arts. Plastic representation and naming also implied the possibility of exerting influence on the represented (or the named) objects in primitive mind. Even in cave paintings of the prehistoric times there appeared the images of animals, stabbed by the spears of the Palaeolithic hunters, which implied their symbolic killing even before the hunting began (Kuret, 1984).

The origins of art in myth are nowadays generally accepted. Romantic philosophy ascribed to it crucial role in artistic production. At the same time the secularisation of mythical themes appeared. Mythical and religious motives were degraded to illusions. Because of that many questions concerning the secularisation problem were raised. Researchers tried to find out whether the ambition to create illusory images for the transmission of messages was already present in the artists' minds, or it was invented later by the interpreters of art (Kovačev, 2003). The majority agreed that the secularisation of art appeared later and was a part of its interpretations, so one can suppose that the artists were still inspired by their sincere religious thoughts.

### *The interpretation of the artistic meanings and their connection with mythical symbolism*

Artistic meanings are multiple meanings and cannot be decoded gradually. According to Gombrich (1967) art is a condensation of simultaneous schemes and it implies

many unconventional or even illogical meanings, which are rarely (or almost never) understood completely. This even enriches the comprehension of the works of art, for their interpretation is always determined by the interaction of its numerous meaning implications and the subject's unconscious. For this reason Gombrich names the unconscious the fourth dimension of semantic space.

The syncretical fusion of meaning with other aspects of artistic reality determines its qualitative difference in comparison with other - arbitrary signs (like words). The particularities of the artistic structure sometimes make its meanings comparable to the magical and ritual meanings. Both of them are namely global, undifferentiated, diffused and polyvalent. Still, artistic sign systems are highly articulated. Their interpretations are determined socially and culturally.

Different cultures develop different interpretation patterns, which are based on conventions that essentially differ from each other. The interpretation of the arts and the determination of their symbolism are concentrated particularly on the latent, implicit meanings.

The meaning dimension of music often implies its textual basis. There exist several types of relations between word and sound. The analogy between the expressed contents enables the expression of the same idea through different media. Still, aesthetic elaboration might be used to cover certain symbolic meanings, which are not recognisable at once.

Literary themes, which serve as the foundation of operas, are not the only factors that contribute to the understanding of their complex meanings. They are namely determined by their context, i.e. by social and cultural factors.

### *The contemporary secularisation of myth and art*

By now the ritual function of art has been lost and it works only in exceptional situations, which can still help the spectator and the listener to experience the Aristotelian catharsis. Because of that mythical thinking and mythical contents are often considered to be the product of the wild imagination, characterised by the lack of causality and logic, which was typical for traditional societies.

### *Interpretation of myth in the psychology of Carl Gustav Jung*

In Jung's psychology myth can be recognised with the help of primordial figures - archetypes in the collective unconscious that reveal themselves with the help of symbols. Jung understood myths and dreams as excellent tools for gaining knowledge about the unconscious contents. He thought that every individual contained an ocean of unconscious material, which might be transported into consciousness.

According to Jung (1938) myth can express the inner personal meanings of truth much better than the objective scientific 'facts'. Personal truth namely cannot be defined or limited to purely rational elements. Jung wrote that human lives become richer, if their

myths and the unconscious are realised. He was sure that each human being possesses 'the almighty deposit of ancestral experience accumulated over millions of years', which he named the 'collective unconscious'.

As scientific understanding grew, the world became dehumanized. Jung (1934-1958) believed that individuals feel isolated in the cosmos because they have ceased to be involved in nature and have parted from their 'unconscious identity' with natural phenomena. He particularly stressed the profound emotional significance, contained in the image of some mythic figures.

The power of reason (asserted by Jung, 1934) eroded man's spiritual values to a dangerous degree, leading to the worldwide disorientation and dissociation. Jung (1934) researched anthropological documentation trying to find out, what happens when a society loses its spiritual values. In such cases people lose the meaning of their lives, social organization disintegrates, and morals decay. According to Jung (1974) dreams help to compensate for this enormous loss. He discovered that the psyche spontaneously produces images with mythic and religious contents. As human life becomes more rational, the dream symbols keep people connected with the symbols of the mysteries of life.

The symbols and archetypes are not static or mechanical, but become alive, when an individual assigns meaning to them. So, the symbol-producing function of dreams is to bring the original mind into an advanced consciousness. The symbols are an attempt to unite and reconcile opposites within the psyche (Jung, 1934-1954).

Jung (1976) defined myth as 'the natural and indispensable intermediate stage between the unconscious and the conscious cognition'. He believed that myths arrived in his life from the other world and was sure that life after death would give a purpose to human lifetime work. He theorised that the more people make conscious, the more they can take with them into the next world. This thought was very close to the decay of the hero (i.e. Siegfried) in Wagner's Ring.

### *Richard Wagner and the Teutonic Myth*

Richard Wagner, the monumental composer, dramatist, philosopher, and poet of the nineteenth century, who crucially transformed the tradition of German music and art, ascribed to the myth immense revolutionary power. He believed that art, in order to be powerful and fundamental to a nation, must be founded upon a myth that is shared by all those, who encounter the works of art. Dissatisfied with the already developed tradition of Greek myths, which was most frequently elaborated in European literary, plastic and musical art, Wagner believed that somewhere in the history, there must exist a myth, fundamental to the distinct German spirit, which can be newly discovered and developed.

### *General characteristics of myth as a source of inspiration*

According to Blumenberg (1986) myth is constantly regenerated and revived by the

replacement of its former contents. Its reduction to the methodical structure and filling the gaps with new contents creates new myths. All attempts to achieve demythologisation in religion, art and hermeneutics lead to the formation of the new forms of ancient myths. Another theory (descending from Schelling's (1998-2000) philosophy) is based on the conviction that there exists a need for a new mythology in human mind. Ideas namely have to be formulated aesthetically and covered with mythology, otherwise they cannot have any positive effects on people.

The present times are characterised by the expansion of new religiousness and new ways of life, which enable individual expression to rise on the level of mythic meanings. Art can still represent mythic structures, but it is also determined by self-conscious reflexive distance from them.

## **RICHARD WAGNER - MUSIC, MYTH, AND SYMBOLISM**

In the history of music it is very difficult to find a famous composer that evoked so many contradictory reactions as Richard Wagner. The commentaries of his work extended from immense adoration to complete rejection. In spite of the ambivalent attitudes towards him, Wagner had a crucial influence on the cultural and spiritual life of 19th century in Germany and many other countries. The content of the majority of his operas was determined by Teutonic mythology.

**Wilhelm Richard Wagner** was a German composer, conductor, theatre director and essayist, primarily known for his operas (or 'music dramas', as they were later called). Unlike most other great opera composers, Wagner wrote the scenario and libretto for his works by himself.

The main characteristics of Wagner's compositions (particularly of those that were composed in his later period) are contrapuntal texture, rich chromaticism, harmonies and orchestration, and elaborate use of leitmotifs, i.e. musical themes associated with particular characters, scenes or plot elements. Wagner invented a lot of advances in musical language (such as extreme chromaticism and quickly shifting tonal centres), which greatly influenced the further development of European classical music (Dallas, 1990).

He transformed musical thought with his idea of Gesamtkunstwerk ('total artwork'), the synthesis of all the poetic, visual, musical and dramatic arts, which he realised particularly in his monumental four-opera cycle 'Der Ring des Nibelungen' (1876). To put his works on an appropriate stage, Wagner has built his own opera house, the Bayreuth Festspielhaus.

### *The life and creativity of Richard Wagner*

Wagner's life itself was a drama. His creative motives were excitement and sensual impressions. He declared himself as a person that needs excitement for his well-being (Honolka, 1968). His real, multifaceted 'I' was realised in his performances. He himself was Tannhä user, Tristan, Hans Sachs, and Wotan, and his aesthetic theories gave no

recipe for his creations. The most important could only be discovered in his work. This is nowadays open to the public and its greatness makes all interpretations (even those written by Wagner himself) unnecessary and vague.

The evolution of Wagner's works and the creative principles, expressed in his music dramas and formulated in several writings, letters and autobiography, reflected different ideological streams of his time. At the beginning he admired J. J. Rousseau, then Herder, Prudhon, Hegel, the ideas of the revolution in 1848, and Feuerbach's idealistic philosophy. Later he was influenced by Schopenhauer's pessimism and finished his ideological development with Parsifalian religious mysticism. These were the bases of Wagner's development of his myth about art, which determined the pathos of his music and the cult of Bayreuth. His complex and contradictory personality had a strong influence on aesthetic ideology of the last decades of the 19th century (Gregor-Dellin, 1983). Particular stress was laid on his musically-dramatic conception of the opera, which evoked a lot of contradictory commentaries.

Wagner wanted his music dramas to reform not only theatre and opera but also the whole human society, which was clearly seen in many of his writings (*Die Kunst und die Revolution* (1849), *Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft* (1849), *Oper und Drama* (1851), *Eine Mitteilung an meine Freunde*). Still, he failed in his endeavours to create works similar to Attic tragedy, which would incorporate culture that was supposed to be subtle and popular at the same time. His reformative missionary did not cause any cultural or social revolution. Nevertheless his influence was very strong. He inspired many contemporary spirits from Nietzsche to Schönberg and Strauss, from Baudelaire to Shaw and Th. Mann (Honolka, 1968).

According to Wagner the opera's greatest deficiency was the fact that the means of expression (music) became the goal. Therefore he tried to achieve complete unity of drama and music. His aim was the achievement of a holistic work of art (**Gesamtkunstwerk**), which (beside music) would also include other art forms, whose effects would be combined in a harmonious whole (Dahlhaus, 1979).

### *Gesamtkunstwerk as a Wagnerian concept*

The term 'Gesamtkunstwerk' was first used by the German writer and philosopher Eusebius Trahndorff in his essay in 1827. It is still unclear, whether Wagner knew that essay or not. He used the term in his essay *Art and Revolution* (1849) and his concept crucially influenced the further development of opera composing.

In 1849, Wagner described the Attic tragedy as the greatest 'Gesamtkunstwerk'. Soon after that, he has written *The Artwork of the Future* (1849), where he expanded the meaning of the concept. Later, in his extensive book *Oper und Drama* (completed in 1851) he profoundly explained his idea of the union of opera and drama (later called *music drama*, although Wagner did not approve of that term), in which the individual arts are subordinated to a common purpose.

Wagner used the term 'Gesamtkunstwerk' to refer to a performance that combines all the arts, including the performing arts (for example music, theatre, and dance),

literature (including poetry), and the visual arts (for example painting, sculpture, and architecture). The Gesamtkunstwerk was intended to be the clearest and the most profound expression of a folk tale or myth, abstracted from its national particularities and transformed into a universal fable (Borchmeyer, 2003).

Wagner felt that the Greek tragedies (particularly the works of Aeschylus) had been the finest examples of total artistic synthesis, but that this synthesis had subsequently been corrupted. During the rest of human history up to the Wagner's time (i.e. till 1850) the arts had drifted further and further apart.

### *Some typical Wagnerian musical innovations*

The idea of opera reform, trying to bring it closer to its 'origins' in Greek theatre was not completely new. Some of its elements had already begun before Wagner at the end of the 18th century as the 'reform opera' movement. Still, Wagner elaborated that idea and created a new type of opera, the so called music drama, which implied the fusion of drama and music that were supposed to be organically connected expressions of the same dramatic idea. As a poet he was writing librettos himself and constantly kept in mind their musically-scenic realisation. Because of that his texts reflected remarkable musical qualities or even indicated his conception of music. The basic characteristics of his work, which were stylistically typical for Wagner, were:

- the so called never ending melody (*unendliche Melodie*),
- symphonic treatment of the musical material with the stress on the orchestra, which moves, forms, and transforms musical motifs;
- systematic use of the leading motifs (*Leitmotive*) - in which sound symbols, that were associated with certain heroes, ideas, or even objects, were intertwined and condensed in the course of dramatic action and created an extreme expressive force in giving life to characters and their psychic states (Kovačev, 2004).

### *Leitmotifs as indicators of archetypes*

A leitmotif (Leitmotiv) is a recurring musical theme, associated with a particular person, place, or idea. At the beginning it was a short melody, but later it could also become a chord progression or even a simple rhythm, which helped to bind a work together into a coherent whole, enable the composer to relate a story without the use of words, or to add an extra level to an already present story. To some extent leitmotifs could even be regarded as musical symbols of archetypes. The word became so popular that it was also often used to denote any sort of recurring theme, whether in music, literature, drama, or life (of a fictional character or a real person).

The use of short and characteristic recurring motifs in orchestral music could be traced back to the late eighteenth century. In French opera of that period 'reminiscence motifs' can be identified, which have recurred at significant junctures of the plots to

establish an association with earlier events. Still, their use has never been extensive or systematic. The power of the technique was exploited early in the nineteenth century by the composers of the Romantic opera, such as Carl Maria von Weber. Motifs were also important in purely instrumental music of that time; the most famous example of them was the opening movement of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, whose central motif was denoted by Beethoven's friend and biographer Schindler as a 'fate knocking at the door'. Similar was also the use of the 'idée fixe' by Hector Berlioz in reference to his *Symphonie Fantastique*.

Among all the composers that used such motifs Richard Wagner was most often associated with the term 'Leitmotiv'. His cycle of four operas, **Der Ring des Nibelungen**, includes dozens of leitmotifs, often relating to specific characters, things, or situations. While some of these motifs appeared only in one of the operas, many of them reappeared throughout the entire cycle (Tanner, 1995). Wagner never authorised the use of the word 'Leitmotiv'. Most often he spoke about 'Grundthema' (basic idea), or simply 'Motiv'. The word was disputed because of its early association with literal interpretations of Wagner's music (f.e. by Hans von Wolzogen, 1876), which often led to contradictions with Wagner's actual practice and intentions. Wagner namely preferred to emphasise the flexibility of thematic associations to leitmotifs, stressing their role in the musical form, and their emotional effects. After Wagner, the use of leitmotifs has been taken up by many other composers (such as Richard Strauss, Sergei Prokofiev, Giuseppe Verdi, Giacomo Puccini, and even Claude Debussy).

### *Other characteristics of Wagner's operas*

There were also some other important factors of Wagner's dramaturgy, above all harmony (whose expressive force is particularly rich and intensified in *Tristan*) and instrumentation. Wagner used several registers that had not been used by then and created many nuances, strong and often bizarre effects and invented unusual sound means.

Wagner's musical reformation was planned and thoughtful. He gave the orchestra symphonic meaning and complex polyphonic structure. The haughty and dominant composer was eager for propaganda and was constantly writing manifestos. He presented supernatural heroes from Teutonic legendary and mythic world and paid a lot of attention to symbolism (Kovačev, 2003). Most of his operas reflect strong patriotism and national identity.

### *Thematic analysis of Wagner's operas*

From thematic aspect Wagner was a specific phenomenon in Romantic music literature. The main motive that appeared in almost all Wagner's music dramas (with the exception of **Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg** in 1868) was the motive of salvation (Honolka, 1968). This appeared already in the opera **Der fliegende Holländer** (1843), where a man under the burden of his guilt was released by the victim of the loving

woman. Tannhäuser's relief, Lohengrin's ill success, the perdition of Tristan and Isolde, the rebirth of the whole world with Brunhilda's victimisation, the redemption of Parsifal – the destiny of all these characters reflected the same idea. Together with Siegfried (a supernatural creature that opposed to all customs) and Wotan (a god, who obeyed them, but was ruined in spite of that) all these heroes represented a part of Wagner's personality. On the basis of their characterisation there was deep pessimism. A man is full of guilt and can be saved only by the grace of God (Honolka, 1968).

Wagner was extremely inclined to the presentation of myths in his operas. Similarly to Greek tragedies his music dramas presented the eternal truths, contained in myths. His main sources were antique theatre, Middle Age Christian legends, and above all Teutonic mythology. The orientation towards mystic themes and old legends appeared already in his early work '*Der fliegende Holländer*' (1843). Later (in his most important operas) it was further developed and adapted to Wagner's idea about the total artwork.

Wagner's first operas (**Die Feen, 1833; das Liebesverbot 1836**) were not particularly successful. Still, they provide valuable information about the development of the composer's creativity. His first remarkable success was his opera '**Rienzi**' (1837), by which he wanted to surpass the French (big) opera. He wrote libretto according to Bulwer Lytton's novel with the same title. The theme of this novel was a fight of Roman public tribune Colo di Rienzi against the wilfulness of feudal noblemen and the clergy for democratic government according to the Roman model in 14th century. The glorification of a public hero and social reformer reveals Wagner's contemporary political orientation which was still the reflection of the Young Germany movement. The strong stress on the external theatrical effects prevents the clear presentation of the basic democratic idea, but in this opera the composer's genius was already evident. His music is full of impulsive life, fire, emotional tensions, and enthusiasm. From the musical point of view the opera is far from what Wagner wanted to achieve, but the content of Bulwer's novel gave him the idea of his future heroes (Millington, 1992).

Wagner realised that the audience that was impressed by the middle age legends and fantastic stories liked the romantic scenery, full of rich, exaggerated costumes and accessories that historically had to be as veritable as possible.

The next important Wagner's opera **Der fliegende Holländer** (1843) was thematically based on old stories about the ghost ships and condemned sailors, which had to sail on the sea forever. The atmosphere in this opera was produced by the presentation of the rough sea. The condensed expression was provided by the orchestration, for the trumpets created the feeling of frightening powerlessness and horror. The libretto was written under the influence of Heine's work and some old stories, told by sailors, but the tragic figure of the sailor surpassed older descriptions. The salvation by the loving woman's sacrifice, which Wagner invented into the story, was a frequent motive in his later operas (Honolka, 1968). In this opera Wagner's musical progress was obvious. The orchestration became richer and the role of the orchestra was getting more and more independent. At that time Wagner was already preparing his great dramatic themes of the future, which brought to the abolishment of time and space, unclear distinction between dreams and reality, the presentation of fate, horror and the individual's burden, caused by the tragic attitude towards the world (Gutman, 1990).

Wagner's search for German national roots was reflected in his choice of the literature which he studied at that time, i.e. German mythology written by the Grimm brothers, Gervenius's history of German literature and the works of Wolfram von Eschenbach, the famous middle age poet.

**Tannhäuser** (1845) was thematically based on two sources: the Middle Age legend about the poet Tannhäuser and the competition of famous poets at the beginning of the XIIIth century (Sivec, 1976). Wagner wanted to integrate both themes into a harmonious whole and gave the drama an outstanding symbolical meaning, presenting the fight between the sensual and the spiritual world. Musically this work was a step back from his opera 'Der fliegende Holländer', and later Wagner changed it for the presentation in Paris (Sivec, 1976).

Neither '**Der fliegende Holländer**' nor '**Tannhäuser**' were accepted with enthusiasm by the audience and the critics. The rejection of Wagner's works was getting obvious. At that time Wagner was also attracted to the coming revolution in 1948 and accused the contemporary political and social situation of responsibility for the unsatisfactory situation, which he worked in (Honolka, 1968). He was also impressed by the anarchist Bakunin. At that time he studied The Nibelungen-Myth and wrote the first draft of Siegfried's death.

Wagner approached music drama with '**Lohengrin**' (1850), where he again used several sources. The story is very old and is known in the tradition of several nations. The German version was created by the famous poet Wolfram von Eschenbach and some anonymous Bavarian poet. In this opera Wagner managed to create a musical differentiation between two different worlds: the bright purity of the knight of Grail and the dark magic Ortruda's world. *Lohengrin* was presented by mystic sounds, which characterised perfectly the messenger of divine forces. Similarly to Wagner's musical development his poetic abilities developed very much. The libretto is symbolically very rich and the leitmotifs are also highly developed. Wagner wanted to introduce the mythological type of history and old legends to present to the audience the past events and stimulate their thinking about the present 'in accordance with eternal values of Germany' (May, 2004).

In the second half of the 19th century being a Wagnerian implied having a strong national identity and being fascinated by symbolism.

Wagner's presentations of supernatural heroes from the Germanic legendary and mythic world achieved their peak in the impressive tetralogy '**Der Ring des Nibelungen**'. Wagner chose the well known theme from ancient Teutonic mythology because he considered myth to represent mutual effects of eternal forces that influence people's relations with gods and nature. He was also sure that myth reflects the structure of the society.

The tetralogy concentrated on religious, social and economic questions, which are presented in myth by symbols, objects and persons. Wagner used several sources when writing the libretto of tetralogy: Nordic legends, German stories, and partly 'The song of Nibelungs' (*Das Nibelungenlied*) from the Middle Ages. To some extent Wagner's ideal when composing the opera was the Attic tragedy. Human Gods, under the burden of guilt, are involved into the destiny of people, who strive for purification. These ideas appeared under the influence of the ancient Greek drama, but were also influenced by

Schopenhauer's pessimism, his negation of life and his longing for destruction (Strunk, 1950).

The poetic language of the libretto is characterised by the rejection of the rhyme and the use of alliteration. Wagner namely considered alliteration suitable for the time, in which people were still poets and the creators of myths. By this he stressed the ancient Teutonic character of the work. Although Wagner used several sources, the opera is extremely individualistic. The characters are presented very plastically and convincingly. The most impressive figure is Wotan, a combination of the humane, the mythic and the philosophical.

The music of the cycle is thick and richly textured, and grows in complexity as the cycle proceeds. In this work Wagner introduced a large orchestra, including several new instruments (such as the so called Wagner tuba, bass trumpet and contrabass trombone). He organized the building of a special theatre (the Bayreuth Festspielhaus), which was constructed particularly to perform this work. The theatre has a special stage which blended the huge orchestra, allowing the singers to sing without any restrictions. Besides, the acoustic of this building is among the best in the world (Spencer, 2000).

The composing of the Ring was a giant work, which lasted about 26 years. Under the influence of actual events Wagner interrupted his composing of tetralogy in the middle of the second act of Siegfried to compose two new operas: 'Tristan und Isolde' and 'Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg'.

**'Tristan und Isolde'** (1865), which is by many considered to be Wagner's greatest single opera, was inspired by Schopenhauer's pessimistic philosophy and Wagner's love for Mathilde von Wesendonck. Thematically it was based on an old Celtic story, which served as a material for several French and German poets. There he presented a passionate love, which was stronger than moral prescriptions (Meyer, 1986).

Wagner composed 'the Ring' in accordance with ancient Greek dramas, which were presented as three tragedies and a satyr play. The Ring properly begins with *Die Walküre* and ends with *Götterdämmerung*, while *Rheingold* is used as a prelude. Wagner called *Das Rheingold* a Vorabend or Preliminary Evening. *Die Walküre*, Siegfried and *Götterdämmerung* were subtitled First Day, Second Day and Third Day.

The epic story includes the struggles of gods, heroes, and mythic creatures, for the possession of the magic Ring, which grants the domination over the entire world. The drama and intrigues continue through three generations of protagonists until the gods' decay at the end of *Götterdämmerung*.

The first part of the tetralogy **'Das Rheingold'** (1869) is comparable to an overture, for it introduces the plot. This is clearly seen in composer's musical and dramatic diction. He did not include any strong accents that appeared in other parts of tetralogy, although some parts are very expressive (f. e. the condemnation scene).

The music of the second part 'Die Walküre' (1870) is very rich and stylistically this is the most complex opera of the cycle. The emotional intensity of the music has been surpassed only in Tristan. The leading motifs are beautifully interwoven and filled with inspiration.

The third part **'Siegfried'** (1876) seems like a sun-ray between the tragic peaks of "die Walküre" and **"Götterdämmerung"**, for it even invents some humour.

The grand finale, 'Götterdämmerung' (1876) is the synthesis of the tetralogy. This is Wagner's maturest work and is very demanding for the audience.

The brilliant and impressive tetralogy was understood by many as a Germanic apotheosis and as such it was abused by nationalist movements, such as Nazism.

The last important Wagner's opera with legendary and mystic theme was '**Parsifal**' (1882), based on the Christian legend of Saint Grail. There he used the theme that was worked on by several Middle Age poets, also by the famous Wolfram von Eschenbach, whose poem inspired Wagner (Beckett, 1981). The central idea is the salvation, but the musical inspiration of old and sick Wagner was weaker than in his earlier works (Sivec, 1976). Parsifal was meant to be performed only in his theatre in Bayreuth and his wish has been respected for even 30 years after its premiere. The cult of Bayreuth remained one of the symbols of German national identity.

### *'The Ring of the Nibelung' and its symbolical implications*

Wagner's tetralogy '**Der Ring des Nibelungen**' is considered by many as his greatest work. Beside numerous musical innovations, it is also rich in symbolism. Every symbol is represented by a leitmotif, some of them even by several leitmotifs. Symbols that according to Jung reveal unconscious archetypes are in this set of operas presented by a musical language or a musical sign system, which has particularly strong influence of the listeners' emotions, and by this it can also evoke archetypes.

The symbolism is implied already in the '*Ring*'s' title, for a ring has a lot of positive and negative implications. As such it also appears in the tetralogy. It can be a source of immense power, but also of misery and decay.

### *Symbolical meanings of the ring and the circle*

The ring represents cooperation, connection, desire, community and common destiny. It is ambivalent, because it can bind two people together or isolate them. It can be a symbol of domination or subordination (Chevalier, Gheerbrant, 1969). In Teutonic mythology the ring is regarded as a treasure, a symbol of wealth, omnipotence and magic. In Wagner's Ring of the Nibelung, its meanings are very similar. The ring is the symbol of power, endowing its possessor with supernatural strength and the domination over his fellows. To get such a powerful instrument always implies a victim, in the *Nibelung*'s case this is the forswearing of love. When ring is demanded from Alberich by Wotan, he curses it, so that it becomes the cause of eternal misery in the world. Its existence ruins everything and only by Brunhilde's victim the world is solved from decay.

The ring can be equalised with the owner's personality, i.e. by the Jungian archetype - the self. To give a ring often means to unite the personalities of the ring-giver and the ring-receiver. Therefore ring can be also a binding symbol.

To some extent the ring has a common symbolism with circle, which represents infinity and eternity, continuity, divinity, and life. It often represents power, dignity,

sovereignty, strength, protection, perfection and cyclicity. To give a ring to somebody may also indicate the transference of power. The same symbolism is implied in mandala, a series of concentric circles in a square around the centre.

The centre symbolizes totality, globality, absolute reality, pure being, and the starting point of everything that exists. For this reason it is considered to be a sacred place that contains the potential for everything. It can be regarded as a rupture in space, or as the place of the transcendence of space and time, in which all contradictions disappear. It is the starting point and the point of return, which is also implied in Wagner's Ring. In the end it is returned to the Rhinemaidens.

The construction of the centre could be denoted as the insertion of the sacred into the profane, i. e. the creation of the world, which is ritualized in almost all traditional societies. Contrary to that, the destruction of the centre, i. e. of the microcosm, which sometimes coincides with the destruction of different means of its protection (walls, labyrinths, moats, trenches, but also the ring, which can protect the subject's personality) symbolises the abolition of an archetypal image of the established order and the regression to the pre-formal, chaotic state of fluidity, amorphism, and undifferentiation, which preceded the cosmogony.

Wagner's ring is the sole stimulus, the cause of everything that occurs physically, emotionally, and intellectually in the tale of the gods. It gives rise to greed, and to a lust for domination and power. It stimulates intense hatred, subtle remorse, the wrath, the woe, indeed the tragedy, in which the drama is steeped. Because of that Wagner gave it recognition in the most appropriate manner. He used it as the title of his masterpiece.

### *Other symbols in the Ring*

Beside the ring, there appear many other important symbols in this cycle. They are always presented by a particular musical theme, which announces events and makes them recognisable even before they really happen. The most frequent of them are:

- the symbols of destroying and purifying (fire the water, particularly the Rhine river),
- the hero (at first Sigmund and then his son Siegfried, who are both of divine origin),
- the weapon (a magic sword and Wotan's spear),
- lightening and thunder, the indicators of destructive forces,
- the dragon, who in Western culture is a frightening and an evil animal,
- the helmet (Tarnhelm), which enables the disappearing or the transformation of its wearers, etc.

## CONCLUSION

Wagner was one of the most impressive and contradictory composers of the Modern Era. As such, he evoked very ambivalent reactions, but also invented many innovations in musical expression. These completely renewed theatrical expression on the stage and caused a lot of changes in further opera performances. Later his personality and

his work became very interesting for psychologists and psychoanalysts, particularly because of his literary talent, which enabled him to present the characters of his operas with a lot of nuances, and a sense of concise and profound psychological observation and interpretation.

The main thematic sources of his operas were myths and legends, which he presented very plastically with the help of the leitmotifs that announce every character even before it appears on the stage. His leitmotifs could be to some extent compared to Jungian archetypes, which also indirectly transmit the eternal truths of the humanity.

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## POVZETEK

Začetki psihoanalize niso bili povezani z glasbo. Prvotna psihoanaliza je raziskovala samo travme posameznikov, ki so se mogle verbalizirati in prevesti v jezik zavesti. Kljub temu pa so Freudovi nasledniki pokazali veliko zanimanja za glasbo, ki je raslo do današnjih dni, zlasti med glasbeno izobraženimi psihoanalitiki. Mnogi sodobni analitiki imajo glasbo za dragocen vir informacij o človekovi psihi, ki lahko pomaga diagnosticirati in zdraviti duševne bolezni. Učinki glasbe na človeška čustva so veliko močnejši kot učinkovanje besed. Razen tega lahko glasba že sama vzbudi podzavestne vsebine.

Zlasti zanimiva je teorija Carla Gustava Junga, ki je bil najprej Freudov občudovalec in kot tak potrdil vrsto njegovih hipotez, a je kasneje razvil popolnoma novo razumevanje človeške psihe, ki jo obvladujejo arhetipi in ki jih je najti v kolektivni podzavesti. Analiziral je sanje, mite in ponavljajoče se motive v različnih kulturah, kar ga je približalo Wagnerjevimi glasbenim dramam. Wagner je bil zelo impresiven skladatelj, ki so ga privlačili starodavni (predvsem tevtonski) miti in njih simboli. Njegovo najpomembnejše delo je obsežna in monumentalna tetralogija »Nibelunški prstan« v kateri mrgoli vodilnih motivov, simbolov in mističnih scen.